WORDS OF RECONCILIATION.

VOL. II.] JULY, 1886. [No. 7.

"OUR DOCTRINAL DISCOVERY."

A brother in the ministry of the Presbyterian Church has written to us as follows:

I have been waiting to see a formulated and affirmative statement of your doctrinal discovery, with proof texts, and without comment; snch as would, in your judgment, be a proper addition to the Confession of Faith. Pardon me if I doubt your ability to put it into that shape. And yet that is the indispensable thing, if much impression is to be made upon us old-fashioned Christians. Negatives will not answer. You must establish a clear affirmative.

What our correspondent is pleased to denote as "our doctrinal discovery" is simply the re-affirmation of a truth as old as Christianity, viz., that, as all men died in Adam, so God has provided for the recovery of all out of the pit of death into which sin has cast them, and that this resurrection of all mankind belongs to the economy of *redemption*. Here is something positive and "affirmative." Nor should it seem to him strange and revolutionary that we should insist that this old and fundamental doctrine should be given rightful acknowledgement in our Confession. Inasmuch as our Confession (Chaps. xxxii., xxxiii., Questions 29, 89, Larger Catechism) declares that the resurrection of the unjust (who constitute up to the present time the vast majority) is wholly for purposes of retribution and aggravation of torment, and inasmuch as it sustains this view by proof-texts which were never meant to teach it, it is time that

this wrong view were expunged, and room made for the right view of the purpose of God in providing life for all who, by reason of the sin of the first man, were adjudged to death.

The wages of sin is death, and resurrection is essentially recovery from death. In connection with this view of its redemptive character, we have taught,

1. That the death threatened includes more than the death of what we call the body. Man consists of "body, soul, and spirit." "Soul" cannot be predicated of pure spirit. But it enters as a constituent element into that form of *embodied* being which we call *man.* As a part of man's embodied being, it is yet of finer essence than the physical frame, and may long survive it. And yet it is mortal and perishable. Jesus plainly teaches that both body and soul may be destroyed in hell (Matt. x. 28). The death penalty of sin includes then (a) The death of the gross material body; (b) The survival in suffering of that finer intermediate structure, the soul, which pertains to embodiment, and which still remains as the spirit's tabernacle beyond the grave (*e. g.*, the case of the rich man, Luke xvi.); (c) The possible destruction of this "soul" in this "place of torment" (Matt. x. 28), leaving the "spirit" homeless and naked, thrust out of its inheritance from life and light in this created system into the outer darkness. Whether the unclothed "spirit of man" retains in its outcast state personal consciousness, is a matter we are not called upon to decide. It is enough to know that all that gave it constitution in manhood is gone. The *man* is dead.

2. This penalty of sin is not a remote, but an immedi-

ately impending doom. Dives went at once to hell. The men that "perished in the gainsaying of Core," and who went down alive into Sheol (Numb. xvi. 30, R. V.), were then and there judged and doomed. The men of Sodom and Gomorrah suffered "the punishment of eternal fire" when those cities were destroyed (Jude 7).

3. Whatever penalty incorrigible sinners may incur after they are restored to life, and however they may become liable to a second death, judgment *for the sins of this life*, and penalty, are visited upon them in the death above described, and before resurrection. When Jesus warned men of the danger of hell-fire (Matt. v. 22), of being cast into eternal fire (xviii. 8, 9) "that never shall be quenched," "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark ix. 43–49), and told them how much better it would be to lop off an offending member than that the whole body should be cast into hell, no one of His hearers would ever imagine that He was referring to a possible destruction of the body in hell after a remote resurrection. The danger was an immediate one. The idea of wicked men being raised from the dead in order to be judged and punished in this way was utterly foreign to the Jewish thinking of that day, and to the whole conception of the meaning of resurrection. The prevalent opinion was that, for the wicked, there was no resurrection. (See pp. 377, 378, of Vol. I.)

These ideas, therefore, that wicked men are already "under judgment" (John iii. 18), that death is their portion, that it must work in them to the entire destruction of body and soul in hell, that their "judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not," but that it is

present and impending, that they are now scorched in body and soul by its flames, and must sink beneath them beyond the grave, these all are consonant with the view that man's period of penalty *for the sins of this life* lies in that death-state which precedes his resurrection, and out of which he is delivered only "in his own order," and in a body which must gather up into itself the fruits of previous character.

We have thus sought to show that all the Bible teaching about death as the wages of sin, about judgment and hell and the eternal fire, is consistent with, and is essentially connected with, this great fact in the plan of redemption which it unfolds, that the Son of God, as man, in man's nature, has, through death, secured the ransom of all men from death. We have constantly reiterated, because our brethren seem so slow of heart to receive it, that this resurrection cannot be simply for purposes of increased retribution, as the Westminster Confession declares, but that it is designed to make room for those judicial and redemptive administrations of the Christ, in which the elect church of this dispensation are to be His associates, and by which He shall fulfil all God's purposes of grace toward the human race, "as He spake by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." But whether we have succeeded in adjusting this great principle of the redemptive character of resurrection to the other aspects of Scripture teaching which set forth "the severity of God," or not, does not affect the truth of the principle itself.

So far, therefore, as there is any "doctrinal discovery" in our teaching, it resolves itself into the enunciation of

this old, old story, that Jesus "gave Himself a ransom for all men, to be testified in due time," and that it was not in wrath but in grace that our Father, God, has provided that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

So far, therefore, as our brother's demand that we shall formulate our "doctrinal discovery" is just, we can reduce it simply to this: "The gracious provision of God in Christ to raise up out of death all men who died in Adam, belongs to His economy of redemption, and is in fulfilment of His ancient promise to bless, through a chosen seed, all the families of the earth." And for the proof, we refer him to Scriptures like these, which we give, according to his desire, "without note or comment:" Gen. iii. 15, xii. 3 (for a type, see Lev. xxv. 9, 10 and compare Is. xlii. 6, 7, lxi. 1, 2, Acts iii. 21); Deut. xxxii. 36–39, 43; Ps. cii. 19–22, R. V.; Is. xxv. 6–8, xxvi. 14–19; Chs. xlii., xliii. (the deliverance promised includes *unregenerate* Israel, vs. 22–25), xlix., 9, 25; Hosea xiii. 9–14; Ezek. xxxvii.; Jer. xxxi. 10, 11, 15–17, xxxii. (Other nations) Is. xix. 24, 25; Jer. xlviii. 47, xlix. 9, 39; Ezek. xvi. 53–63; Ps. lxxii. 17; Luke i. 48, ii. 10; John iii. 17; Acts xxiv. 15; Rom. v. 12–21, xi. 29–36; 1 Cor. xv. 21–26; Titus ii. 11, R. V.; 1 John ii. 2; Rev. xv. 3, 4, xxi. 24.

We ask him to study these Scriptures candidly and prayerfully, and decide whether they do not involve promises to past generations of men who died in ignorance and sin, which can be fulfilled to them only through and after their resurrection from the dead. Do they not prove that God has some higher and

better purpose in store in the resurrection of the unjust than merely to try and sentence them again, and thrust them back to hell, to be punished with eternal and "unspeakable torments both of body and soul, with the devil and his angels forever?" See Westminster Confession, as above. We ask him, too, to consider whether the Westminster divines, in arranging the proof-texts from which they derived these formulas, did not make the mistake of appropriating passages which set forth the doom upon which the sinner at once enters beyond the grave, to a doom beyond the resurrection? Does our correspondent believe that Matt. xxv. 31–46 describes a judgment of the living nations of mankind, or of the masses of the resurrected dead? Is that judgment identical with that of the great white throne (Rev. xx.)? Do not the threatenings of Matt. v. 29, xviii. 8, 9, Mark ix. 43–47, etc., relate to a possible destruction of man's *present* embodied being? If so, by what authority are they referred to in our Standards as proof that his body is to be raised out of the grave in order to be thus destroyed, or rather preserved in the salt of an endless fire for torment? Is the destruction referred to in 2 Thess. i. 8, 9 to be visited upon ungodly men living on the earth when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven, or upon men raised from the dead? All these Scriptures have been thus wrongly located and mis-applied because we have been so long blind to the truth that the living God is "the Saviour of all men," to the extent at least that all have been ransomed from the grave. We have been confused at this point because we have failed to see that there is an universal redemption to *life*, which is

not to *eternal* life, except for those who are begotten again in Christ Jesus; but that, for all others, a new gift of life, while it must bring trial, correction, responsibilities and perils, is yet a recovery and a gracious opportunity.

If the resurrection of the unjust be thus redemptive, it is not recognized as such in our Standards. The contrary is everywhere implied. But it is plain that, if true, it ought to be allowed to modify and re-shape the solemn statements framed to set forth the truth concerning man's eternal destiny. Whether *we* are competent to make the adjustment or not, it ought to be made. Our correspondent, who is a brother minister with us in this church, is as much bound to make it as we are. The question is simply, Is this principle true? We ask him to ponder this question candidly, patiently, prayerfully, and to seek the truth about it from the only source, the Word and Spirit of God.

"THE PLAN OF THE AGES."

(CONTINUED.)

By Rev. A. P. Adams, in *The Spirit of the Word.*

This brings us to another question; I may be asked, "Are you not making too much of this figure? does it mean anything more than that all the redeemed—the finally saved, are to be in perfect union and harmony with the Father and the Son? that is to say does not the one body include all the saved?" John xvii. answers this question in the negative. Whoever will

read that chapter through carefully, with reference to this point, will see that a distinction is very sharply maintained between Christ's own—those whom the Father had given Him—and "the world," and that the former were to reach a perfect unity in order that the latter might be blessed in their turn—"that the world might believe"—"that the world might know." In short, this chapter teaches that the class whom the Father had given to Christ, after they had been made "perfect in one," were to be the means somehow of convincing and enlightening the world, the mass of mankind (compare Jude 14, 15). Now this class of Christ's own, those whom the Father has given Him in this special sense and for this special purpose (compare 1 Tim. iv. 10), are, according to Paul, a part of the one promised seed. "*If ye be Christ's*, then are ye Abraham's seed," and this is also the class that is to be first made alive in the perfect sense at the coming of Christ (1 Cor. xv. 22, 23). All that have died in Adam shall be made alive in Christ, "but every man in his own order, Christ the first-fruits, afterward *they that are Christ's* at His coming." And it will further be readily seen by any one who will carefully compare scripture with scripture, that this class is also identical with the "members" of the mystical body, also they are "the assembly," and "the sons of God." Now does this class embrace *all* the saved? The figure of the promised seed answers this question. This class, as we have seen, is the promised seed. Does the seed include all the saved? Why, certainly not. The seed is a class in whom the great mass of mankind—"all the families of the earth"—are to be

blessed. Surely the instrument of blessing and the ones blessed are distinct classes, and the instrument must first be perfected before the work can be done that is to be effected by that instrument.

In several passages Christ is spoken of as "first-fruit." See Rom. xi. 16; 1 Cor. xv. 20, 23. This Bible teaching is familiar to most Christians; but, as we have seen, in the case of the one body and the promised seed, Christ is not the *entire* first-fruit; or to express it more exactly, there are

TWO FIRST-FRUITS,

of which Christ is "the *first* of the first-fruits"—Ex. xxiii. 19—and *we* are also "a kind of first-fruit"—Jas. i. 18. This is a subject of great interest and importance in itself, but I can only refer to it very briefly now. In the law, "which has a shadow of good things to come," there was to be offered to the Lord in the early part of the ecclesiastical year which began in the spring, two first-fruits. One at the paschal season, the 14th day of the first month, corresponding to our April, and the other at Pentecost, fifty days later; see Lev. xxiii. We know that Christ is the antitype of the paschal first-fruit—"Christ our passover is crucified for us"—1 Cor. v. 7, 8. The paschal first-fruit was a single sheaf of wheat, and was to be waved before the Lord "on the morrow after the Sabbath," accompanied, for a burnt offering, by a single male lamb without blemish. Christ is the antitype. He rose from the dead, "the first-fruits of them that slept," "on the morrow after the Sabbath"—Mark xvi. 1—and he is the "lamb without blemish and without spot"—1 Pet. i. 19. Christ was thus the paschal

first-fruit. Pentecost, fifty days later, we know was connected with the church; on that day the church received "the gift of the holy spirit," "which is the *earnest* of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession"—Eph. i. 13, 14. This outpouring of the spirit was the *earnest*, first instalment, or "first-fruits of the spirit." Thus the church is first-fruits as well as Christ —Jas. i. 18.

Passover and Pentecost are thus fulfilled in Christ and "the assembly," the one body. Now again we ask, do these first-fruits include *all* the saved? Where would be the significance of calling them *first*-fruits if no other fruits were to follow? and where would be the antitype of the third great feast under the law in the latter part of the year—"the feast of Tabernacles," or of Ingathering, *i. e.*, the ingathering of the general harvest? Passover and Pentecost, we have seen, prefigure Christ and the church—does not Tabernacles beautifully and grandly foreshadow the "times of the restitution of all things." Acts iii. 21; when "the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption?"

Before passing on to another point I would call attention to one more passage that still further explains the subject of the first-fruits; viz., Rev. xiv. 1–5. Read this passage and compare it with the foregoing considerations and you will see that the view presented is fully confirmed. Especially notice that this "hundred and forty-four thousand" are already redeemed and glorified, and yet they are only "the *first*-fruits unto God and the Lamb." There is one other figure used to set forth this same idea of the One Body—the many in one—that I

will merely refer to in passing; viz., that which represents Christ and the church as husband and wife—Eph. v. 22–32; "they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

I have dwelt upon this subject of the "one body" or the promised seed, because it is the central idea of God's plan of creation. As the Plan of the Ages is the key to the understanding of the entire Bible, so the mystery of the One Body is the key to the understanding of the Plan of the Ages. Now we will give a

SUMMARY OF THE PLAN OF THE AGES

drawn from the foregoing considerations.

God is creating a race of beings in his own image and likeness according to an exact, unchangeable and predetermined Plan. A plan that covers the whole work from Eden lost to Eden regained, spanning the Ages past, present, and to come, and which never has been changed or delayed in the smallest particular or in the least degree, and which never can fail in jot or tittle, or fall a hair's breadth below its ultimate perfect accomplisment. This perfect plan of God provides that all who have died in Adam shall be made alive in Christ. *But every man in his own order* (band or class). The first order embraces Christ and "they that are Christ's," or those whom the Father has *given* him (in this special sense). These are all first-fruits, and, as *One* Body they constitute the Promised Seed in whom, when perfected, all will be blessed. The work of this gospel age is to perfect the *seed; that* is the sole work of "this present evil age"(Gal. i. 4, N. V., *not* to save the world, as the great mass of Christians, ignorant of God's plan of the *ages*,

think, but to prepare this special "order" through whose instrumentality this result will be reached in "the ages to come." This "order" is a class of perfected human beings, with Christ at their head—*one* with the Father and the Son, even as they are one, and hence making one body, one seed, and "One New Man"—Eph. ii. 15—though there are many members—the "Kings and Priests," and Judges, and "Saviours" of mankind in the "Times of the Restitution of all things," until "*Every created thing*" shall praise God. Rev. v. 13, N. V. compare also in the New Version, Rom. xiv. 11 and Rev. xxii. 3.

QUOTATION FROM DR. SCHAFF.—In commenting upon Matt. xxv. 40, in Lange's Commentary, p. 449, Dr. Schaff remarks as follows: "Every consideration of God's justice and mercy, and every impulse of Christian charity leads us to the hope that those will be ultimately saved, who without knowing Christ in this life, have unconsciously longed after Him, as the desire of all nations and of every human soul; but it can only be through an act of faith in Christ, whenever He shall be revealed to them, though it be only on the judgment day. We cannot admit different terms of salvation."

These sentiments are not precisely ours. But they serve to show that the larger hope is held by men high in the confidence of the Presbyterian Church.

On pg. 212 of its Standards we read, however, "They who *having never heard the gospel*, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in Him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, or the laws of that religion which they profess." In these words, and in other places, the intent of the Standards is to limit the possibility of salvation for all men to this life. We ask again, is it not time that the Standards be revised, or else that the Church authoritatively declare that she does not mean to limit liberty of opinion upon these points which are not *de fide?*

STUDIES IN THE BIBLE.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT WHITE THRONE.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. . . . And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with man, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God; and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more; the first things are passed away. And He that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. Rev. xx. 11—xxi. 5., N. V.

The commonly accepted view of this passage is that it describes a simultaneous resurrection of all classes of mankind, good and evil, for the determination of their final destiny at one great assize. We shall find upon closer study that this is a mistake. It relates to the judgment of the unjust dead; and it corresponds therefore to the last half of verse 29 in John v., in which our

Lord speaks of the "resurrection of judgment." That verse gives us indeed a general picture of all resurrection. It is only from other passages that we certainly determine that resurrection is eclectic and progressive—that the saints come forth to "the resurrection of life" as a first-fruits company from among the dead (Phil. iii. 11; see Greek. 1 Cor. xv. 23, etc). The context of this passage speaks definitely of "the first resurrection" (vs. 6, 7), and of the saints as living and reigning with Christ through a prolonged period before the judgment here described. Indeed we learn from such passages as Matt. xix. 28, 1 Cor. vi. 2, that they execute it. "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" The judgment of the great white throne cannot therefore include this class, and to this extent at least is not universal. We believe, indeed, that the very office to which these first-born sons of God are called, under their Head, is to raise the dead and carry on, under Him, those administrations by which the captives in Sheol shall, each in their own order, be recovered from its grasp. Hence this was made a feature in that miniature type of the kingdom of God which Jesus gave when He sent out the twelve saying, "And as ye go, Heal the sick, raise the dead." (Matt. x. 7, 8.) It is probable that a barrier to the right understanding of this whole passage has been raised by the insertion into the text of verse 5, which was very likely at first a parenthetical comment put in the margin by some transcriber. The verse reads, "The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished." The oldest manuscript, the Sinaitic, and the Syriac Version, do not contain this verse. And it

certainly harmonizes better with all we have learned from the study of the Old Testament concerning God's purpose to redeem mankind from death through a resurrection, to suppose that the "times of the kingdom," here referred to as the reign of the saints with Christ, are throughout times of resurrection. The various orders of mankind would then be raised, not all at once, but as each class was fitted for it. But, whether the recovery of these past generations is admitted to be thus progressive or not, the passage we are studying, which speaks of their judgment before the great white throne, must present to us pictorially the results of that trial and judgment to which resurrection introduces them.

All our previous studies in this series have shown how vital and fundamental in the whole plan of Scripture is this truth, that, from the beginning, God has provided blessing for all the families of the earth through an anointed seed, and that this blessing can reach the vast majority of at least past generations only through their resurrection. No other passage in the Bible seems to militate against this view so strongly as the one now before us. We have already indicated, however, the way by which it may be brought into harmony with this primary truth. We have simply to regard it as presenting in a pictorial way the final results of that age, or those ages, of trial and judgment through which the nations are to be conducted by Christ and his risen saints, and to which they shall be introduced through a resurrection from the dead. The initial mistake of the old interpretation lies in its co-ordinating this judgment of the *dead* with that of the *living*, described in Matt.

xxv. It is therefore viewed as a judgment of the resurrected masses of mankind, good and bad, for their conduct in this present life.

But to this view there are these fatal objections:

1. The righteous are seen as already exalted to thrones. They are already safe within "the camp of the saints" and "the beloved city" (vs. 9). The saved of this dispensation cannot therefore be of the class who are here judged, nor must any book needs be opened in order to determine their title to eternal life. They already have it. This "book of life" cannot therefore be identical with the "Lamb's book of life" (chaps. xiii. 8, xxi. 27). It must be another book, pertaining to a new economy under which the unrighteous dead are raised and put under new responsibilities, such as a new gift of life would bring to them.

2. With regard to the results of this present trial in life, this class of men are already judged (John iii. 18, 36) and under the abiding wrath of God. They cannot attain to righteousness under the law, and most of them have never had any probation under the gospel. They are all therefore "guilty before God" (Rom. iii. 19). And not only judgment, but the death sentence has been passed upon them all (vs. 12).

3. This sentence has been actually visited upon them. "The wages of sin is death." These men had died. Sin had killed them in body and soul. They were already captives in the prison of "death and hell."

4. Their trial and sentence therefore are not set for a distant judgment day. We have already seen in our examination of Matt. xxv. 31–46, that Jesus Christ is

now the Judge of quick and dead, and that the sorting between sheep and goats and the consignment to eternal fire are now going on. Man's judgment *for the sins of this life* is before resurrection. We believe it to be essential to all right conceptions of God's dealings with mankind on account of sin, that we should regard the wicked dead, as not awaiting the awards of a remote day of judgment, but as already judged and suffering the just consequences of their sins. Was not the rich man in hell already doomed? Have not Sodom and Gomorrah already suffered the vengeance of eternal fire? (Jude 7). What else than a present judgment and a swift sentence was that by which Korah and his company went down alive into Sheol? (Num. xvi. 30). The Apocalypse does indeed once refer to a time of the dead when they should be judged (xi. 18); but the context shows that what is referred to is the time for vindicating God's saints who had died in faith, awaiting their reward.

The one fatal objection therefore to the current view of this passage is that it makes this trial-scene to be the raising of an issue which was settled long before, the re-enactment of a sentence already passed and of a penalty already inflicted. The wicked dead have been already judged and turned into hell.

II. What then is the character and purpose of this judgment of the resurrected dead? Our study of John v. 29 has already indicated the answer. The object in the resurrection of the unjust is to put them again under the trial and discipline which pertain to embodied life. This passage sets before us this fact and furnishes a vivid picture of the final results of this

trial. In conformity with the teaching of all Scripture, we are obliged to view this judgment as a prolonged judicial administration. In favor of this view, we have

1. The analogy of the passage from Daniel vii. upon which the vision is based. There we have also the placing of a throne of glory. We have the same formal opening of what appears to be a great assize. "The judgment was set and the books were opened" (vs. 10). And yet what follows in the vision is evidently a continuous administration, during which all powers hostile to the dominion of the Son of Man are destroyed, and all peoples, nations and languages brought into subjection to His sceptre. So this summoning of the dead before the great white throne is to be regarded as a condensed picture of a long administration, during which the earth, the sea, and the whole empire of death and Hades give up their dead, who are thus brought under the judicial sway of the Son of Man.

2. Other passages, especially where resurrection is referred to, condense into "an hour," and present upon one plane of vision such long continued processes. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live" (John v. 25). If this refer to spiritual quickening, as is commonly supposed, the "hour" referred to lasts through the whole of this dispensation. So the hour of verse 28, during which "all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and come forth," must be the whole period of His conquests in the realms of death for the liberation of all its captives, until the last enemy is himself destroyed. Such progressive

stages of triumph and deliverance are plainly indicated in 1 Cor. xv. 22–27. "For as in Adam all die, so also in the Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; then they that are Christ's, at his coming. Then the end, or the fulfilment (το τέλος), when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God; even the Father; when He shall have abolished all rule and authority and power. For He must reign until He hath put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death." All the Old Testament references to the Messiah's reign, as well as those in the New, in which the fact is plainly brought out that this reign is to be in the power of His resurrection and to embrace the generations of the dead, preclude the idea of a brief assize, and require such a long period of rule and judgment as we have supposed. We have therefore not only a warrant, we are imperatively obliged to bring this obscure passage into harmony with this fundamental fact of Scripture. And in doing so, we violate no principle of interpretation, but only follow the analogies of all the passages which set forth these great events and issues of the future. Each and all of them, whether they relate to the Messiah's reign and judgment, to the resurrection of the dead, or to the renewal of the heavens and earth, are thus comprehensive and far-reaching.

In conformity then with this principle, our exegesis of this passage would run somewhat thus:

And I saw a great white throne and Him that sat upon it. This expression indicates the perfect purity of that throne from which the Christ shall judge the world in righteous-

ness.—*From whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.* Many interpreters regard the phrase, "heaven and earth," in this and parallel passages as denoting governmental systems. That all these must pass away before the coming of the perfect system is most true. But there is no warrant for refusing to regard this feature of the vision as predictive of those great cosmical changes often referred to in Scripture as included within the scope of God's redemptive plan. The whole creation is to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. No redemption of the human race can be complete which does not include the physical system to which it belongs, and of which it is the appointed heir (Gen. i. 26–28, Ps. viii). Hence, both Old and New Testament prophecy (Ish. lxv. 17–25, 2 Peter iii.) contain most distinct and emphatic promises of such palingenesis, and the Apocalypse ends with a glowing and lovely picture of it. This period of change is a parturition period, and hence this general resurrection of the dead is connected with and forms a part of it. And this itself confirms what has been already said of its protracted character. St. Peter assures us that we are not to measure these great steps in God's working by human standards. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne. . . . And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them.

As the seer beholds in one picture the progressive

transformation of the "earth and the heaven," so the successive triumphs over the empire of death are viewed as one great conquest. All the dead, great and small, from earth and sea, and the depths of hell, are recovered out of the grasp of death. But, as we have seen, all analogies of prophecy, and especially as such vast and distant changes are brought within its scope, forbid us to regard the resurrection of these countless dead as simultaneous. It must proceed in ever widening circles, gathering in wider and wider harvests, according to the law, "each in his own order." Such progress indeed is indicated in the vision, which has its climax in the casting of death and Hades into the lake of fire. It thus corresponds with the progress denoted by St. Paul in 1 Cor. xv., where the advancing power of Christ's resurrection issues in the subjection of all things under His feet.

And books were opened: and another book was opened, which is of life: and the dead were judged out of the things written in the books, according to their works.*

This feature of the vision is repeated from that of Daniel. The judgment there depicted is national rather than personal. The world-power had gone through its course of evil, and now it must come to its proper issue. It must be destroyed, and the dominion of the world be transferred to the saints. The opening of the books, therefore, is the solemn assertion of God's great law of harvest. Nations, men, must reap as they sow. We know that this law must govern the resurrection harvest.

---

* The words "the book" do not occur here in the original.

And it is this to which St. John's vision relates. The "books" are the sign to us that, by God's laws of life, character is wrought into embodiment. The body gathers up and perpetuates the fruits of previous conduct. Hence, the law of resurrection is, "To every seed his own body." "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things through the body, according to the things he did" (2 Cor. v. 10, Greek).

Saint and sinner are alike subject to this law. Character, in this world, is being wrought into every fibre of the body. And on the wondrously woven and folded leaves of its organism are written out the results of conduct and of life. The body is a record of the past, and a volume in which are daily written God's judgments. The resurrection opens out a new volume in man's life, but the results and recorded judgments of the past are transcribed in it. Hence, in the resurrection, the secrets of all hearts and lives will be made manifest in the form, the grade, the potencies of the recovered manhood. The Judge will not need to refer to a book as an aid to His recollection. "All things are naked and manifest before Him." Nor will men need to search any other records, in order to approve His judgments, than those which are wrought into the fabric of their lives, and determine the character of their embodiment.

But the question arises, Are these results final and irreversible? Is there no room for change, for deterioration or improvement, in this life to come? Is the new life conferred, to the unjust, an unmitigated curse? To show that it cannot be, we have only to rise from that

low conception of the Messiah's work of judgment which views it as only vindicatory and punitive to the large Scriptural conception of it already noticed. God's great laws of life are fixed and irrevocable, as, for example, the law of heredity. According to this law, men are continually being born into the world on low planes of life and with vicious tendencies. But even in these cases the gift of life is a blessing and carries with it possibilities of amendment and enrichment. There is a strong *vis medicatrix* inherent in all life, an unwearying power of recovery. And therefore the life conferred at the resurrection, although burdened with the evil heritage of the former life, must be, to those who were held captive by death, a boon, and must bring with it possibilities of good. The law, "according to the fruit of the doings," must follow such a life all through its career. But, in God's great economy, the tendency of even this law is to work for the betterment of its subjects. And so the Messiah's reign of judgment must tend toward the good of even those whom He judges. It is a corrective administration. The Scriptures constantly speak of it in this character. We have seen that we must learn to view the great events depicted in this passage as the graphic strokes in a picture whose outlines are large and deep. Instead of a mere assize, we must conceive of a long judicial reign, during which the dead are awarded such kind and character of life as becomes to them a process of judgment and correction. And during it *another book of life* is opened, in which the names of those are recorded who pass successfully through this new trial of life and gain its crown.

And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. This period of Christ's reign ends with this final victory. The kingdom of the dead, having yielded up all its prisoners, is itself destroyed. The lake of fire swallows up all enemies. All things are made new. The renovation embraces and forever unites in blessed concord the heaven and earth. The lake of fire is called the second death, because it becomes the grave of those who had been raised out of a first death, and are found unworthy, and because it rids the cosmos forever of the reign of this fell destroyer.

And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

We have already found that the term "eternal fire" denotes that devouring energy of nature by which all defective and sinful forms of embodied life are consumed. The term "lake of fire" seems to define the final form of this energetic action, by which all things that offend, and all evil doers, are finally destroyed out of this created system. Its age-long enemies, the devil and his angels, and the great depositories of their trophies, death and hell, are all alike cast into this furnace of fire and destroyed. Everything and everyone that clings to the empire of evil perishes with it. This grand result is entirely inconsistent with the idea of the perpetual existence of these enemies in endless agony in some hell of fire. Hell, in any such aspect of it, is itself doomed to destruction. And, therefore, all who are consigned to it perish with it. The idea that God will preserve in a deathless existence of misery those who fail to enter into

life is irreconcilable with His character and purposes, and is utterly at war with all that is told us concerning His crowning gift of eternal life. There can be no immortal life in sin, for sin is essentially the destroyer of life. Any organism in which it is embodied contains the seeds of its own destruction. Hence, at the final summing up, "if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire."

And yet we must not make the mistake of confounding this final summing up with the sorting of mankind into sheep and goats now going on (Matt. xxv), nor suppose that there is no interval between the "resurrection of judgment" (John v. 29), and the final judgment here described. Between the setting up of the great white throne and the lake of fire, there must be a long interval of times of resurrection, which are times of renewed trial in life, involving the opening of another book of life, suited to this new age of trial. If any fail of the crown of life under the favorable circumstances under which this new opportunity of life is conferred, they must suffer the second death. Their failure seems to be final and irreversible.

It will be thus seen that our interpretation of the judgment of the great white throne differs from that commonly received in these two particulars.

1. While the passage brings prominently before us the *results* of the great judgment process it describes, we must still view this process as prolonged through the age, or perhaps ages, to come, during which the Christ is subduing all His enemies and ridding the creation, of which He is the Heir, of all those invisible enemies

who have converted its fair fields into the camp of death. This involves the liberation of the myriads of death's captives, who "stand up" again in life before His throne.

2. This new gift of life, while it is conferred according to previous character, brings with it a new trial before its results are finally determined. If this idea is not found on the surface of the record here, it is required by all that Scripture teaches concerning the character of the Messiah's administration, and also by its teaching about death as the wages of sin, and of the redemptive character of resurrection. To make room for these important features in this passage, it is only necessary to admit the obvious principle that it does not describe sudden and simultaneous events, but sharply defines the outlines and results of great and prolonged administrations. From this point of view there is no difficulty in harmonizing it with what we have found to be the current teaching of all Scripture with regard to resurrection, that it is a "hope" and that even the raising up out of death and hell of the unjust dead belongs to the economy of redemption. This feature of the divine plan is so inwrought into the texture of Scripture promises and hopes, it is so consistent with the character of God, and with all we have learned of His plan of creation, and its progressive development of life, that we are obliged to regard it as true and incontrovertible, however we may find it hard to adjust to such an obscure passage of Scripture as the one we have been studying. If any are disposed to regard our effort to reconcile it to this passage as a failure, we beg such not to reject the principle itself. It is too well established in Scripture to be dislodged by

any single passage, and especially one so obscure as this. Still less must any man's failure to reconcile it be accepted as evidence against it. When this whole book is better understood, some way of explaining this passage will be found which will neither impair its testimony, nor dim in the least the lustre of that great principle which has been our morning star through the twilight of all Old Testament prophecy. Once admit that the fact that the Christ has been ordained of God to be the Judge of all men, living and dead, is a part of His *gospel*, that the dead are to be brought under His judicial dealing through their resurrection, that this universal resurrection is in the line of His promised redemption which, to this extent at least, is a blessing in store for all the families of the earth, and even such hard passages as this will not militate against it, nor quench the light which this great principle throws upon all the dark places in God's Word, and all the dark features of His world-long dealing with the children of men.

NOTES ON CURRENT OPINIONS AND EVENTS.

THE LOUISIANA MOVEMENT.—An important step in the direction of Church Union, was recently taken at the annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Diocese of Louisiana. A lay deputy introduced a memorial to the next General Convention, petitioning them to take such action as should empower all bishops to offer to extend to all Evangelical bodies of Christians, the special gifts of order which that church claims to possess, and to ordain their ministers, without compelling them to withdraw from or to break up their present organizations, or to conform

wholly to the order of worship prescribed by the Episcopal Church. The matter was debated, and the following paper was finally adopted.

The Diocese of Louisiana, in the fear of God, and with a deep sense of love and reverence for the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church in the United States of America, and for the promotion of the honor and glory of God, in the more perfect and complete union and inter-communion of Christians who hold the ancient and apostolic faith in its purity, would most reverently set forth this memorial to the General Convention of the Church in this land:

That citing the words uttered in prayer by our Divine Lord and Master at the close of the Paschal Supper, and on the immediate event of His betrayal and crucifixion:

"That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in thee, that they also be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

"And the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them, that they may be one as we are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me," etc., is a prayer unanswered to this day; and for the non-fulfilment of which denominationalism among Christians is alone responsible.

And impressed with an overwhelming sense of the responsibitity of this Church in the premises, we pray the General Convention of this Church, convened in the city of Chicago, in the year of our Lord, 1886, and the —— day of October thereof, to set forth a memorial to all Christians, as individuals and denominations declaring:

That most humbly acknowledging the responsiblity of this Church, in the negligent discharge of her exalted duties, or in the infirmity that pertains to all human instrumentalities, for the differences that divide, and that keep apart all Christendom, causing the deadly sin of schism in the body of Christ our common Lord; which estops the progress of the Gospel, opposes the strongest barriers to its forward movement and provides a lodgment and defense for infidels and heathen alike, as prophesied by our Lord and Master in the prayer above cited; and that for the purpose of healing these multiplied schisms and the bringing together of God's Children to one table, to partake of the blessed body and blood of Christ at one altar, and thereby blotting out all differences between godly and righteously disposed persons who hold a common faith, in that most blessed feast of love and holiness;

And without any purpose of proselyting;

But under an overwhelming sense of the necessity of the Divine order in the church, as handed down from past ages, for the full, perfect and free promulgation of the Holy Gospel to all nations, kindreds and tongues.

This Church does now humbly, devoutly and reverently, and for the sole honor and glory of God, offer to share this divine depositum with all Christian ministers and Christian bodies who love the Lord Jesus Christ, in truth and sincerity, and who, in the bonds of a holy and perfect faith, as symbolized in the Apostles' Creed, shall desire to form that perfect, entire and complete union in spirit and in purpose which is contemplated in the words of prayer of the Lord, the Christ, as cited in the foregoing part of this memorial, and which can only be accomplished at the Lord's table, in the joint reception of the body and blood of our common Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Therefore your memorialists offer for your prayerful and most earnest consideration the following resolutions, committing them and you to the wise and loving care and guidance of the Holy Ghost.

Resolved, By the Council of the Diocese of Louisiana, convened in St. Paul's church, in New Orleans, on this ——day of May, in the year of our Lord, 1886, that the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, be and is herein most respectfully, humbly and earnestly petitioned to instruct its commission on ecclesiastical relations to abandon the passive policy heretofore followed in respect to those bodies of Christians generally recognized as "evangelical," and to send overtures in writing to the governing bodies of said several denominations, inviting them to conference on the matter of church unity; and further, that the bishops of said commission be authorized and empowered to visit officially, when practicable, the session of such governing bodies for the like purpose.

To this proposal *The Presbyterian* replies that such a manifesto, put forth with an evident desire for the unity of the church, ought to command a respectful hearing from all who profess and call themselves Christians. At the same time it refuses to admit that the Episcopal Church is the exclusive possessor of a divine "*depositum*," which all other Christian bodies ought to be at once eager to share. It repudiates the thought that its old and honored ministers should be compelled to confess that their past service in the ministry was unauthorized, and to accept a fresh commission at the hands of her Bishops. It says,

"It is somewhat ungracious to decline a gift so freely offered, but we presume that most of the denominations to be consulted would insist as preliminary to all negotiations, upon the recognition of the validity of their present order, to be followed by a corresponding claim, quite as important and as imperative —the recognition of the validity of the sacraments as administered by this valid ministry. Negotiations could not go far which did not respect these conditions of inter-communion. We see no basis, therefore, for real union in this astounding proposal."

This we presume, is a fair sample of the spirit in which such a measure would be likely to be received by the various denominations affected.

It certainly is to the honor of this old historic church that such a desire for the unity of the One Body should be cherished, and that she should propose any measure, even if impracticable, looking to this greatly desired end. On the ground of her antiquity, of catholicity of creed, of dignity and worth, it is eminently proper that this church should originate such a movement. And on these grounds, if on no other, other Christian bodies should consider well and prayerfully how they ought to respond to it. Some respect is due to a claim for that form of Church order which all admit prevailed in early, if not apostolic, times, and in which the church has existed through by far the greater part of her history. We regret that the answer of *The Presbyterian* is a flat refusal to concede anything to that claim.

And this leads us to remark that the true basis of Church Union must be sought in a way different from either this proposed action, or such action as *The Presbyterian* demands. Neither a general acceptance of the Episcopal claim, nor its abandonment, would bring about such union as the prayer of Jesus contemplates. External union is most desirable. But it must be preceded by, and give expression to, a unity of the Spirit. If there were more of this inward unity, the product of the One indwelling Life, the promise "He shall guide you into all truth" would soon be verified. The questions which divide Christians can never be settled by intellectual discussion. They can only be joined together in the same mind by

the one Spirit. Their existing divisions are *prima facie* evidence that the office of the Spirit in the Body is partly frustrated. *He is quenched.* He cannot properly fulfil His functions among these *disjecta membra.* The body of Christ is an organism. Therefore, in the present condition of things, the manifestation of the One Life must be fitful and incoherent.

What is needed therefore, first of all, is not the obtrusion of any claims of any portion of the church, however well founded, but a common confession of all portions, of the sins and ignorances which have brought upon it this divided state. If the Episcopalian and the Baptist are both members of one Body, then the sin of either is the sin of both. If the hand, or the eye, or the tongue sins, the whole man sins. So the sin of any branch of the church is the sin of all. Our different denominations, therefore, instead of coming together for fresh discussions, must convene first, to make common confession before God of the sin of the whole Body, and then, for prayer that God would send forth His light and truth to lead them out of this present darkness and confusion. Let the coming General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church issue such a call for humiliation and prayer, inviting Christians of every name to come together for this purpose, proposing if they will, forms of confession and prayer suitable for such gatherings, and something intensely practical, and striking right at the root of the evil, will be at once accomplished. Nothing short of this will meet the case. We are not fit to discuss or to propose, until we have first confessed our sins one to another and to God. If the church had not gone astray from Him, her Lord would never have suffered her to fall into this divided state. Controversies would not have been engendered. Schisms would not have ripened. New and larger views of truth granted to a portion would have been thankfully received as God's gracious gift to all. Let us get back then, brethren, on to this ground. Before we discuss the doctrine of baptisms, and laying on of hands and other principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us try to get back into the life of Christ, which is one. The church was baptized at Pentecost before she was prepared to formulate her faith, or even to comprehend its rudiments. Life must precede light. Love must go before knowledge.

The action of the Louisiana Diocese opens up a grand

opportunity to the Protestant Episcopal Church in these United States. Its General Convention is approaching. The subject of the divided state of Christendom, and these desires for unity in its own communion, must claim its attention. No other Christian body in the land is so well fitted to initiate a movement for union. We believe that no other has so strong a claim to speak with authority upon this matter. What shall she say? Shall she merely reiterate her high claims? Shall she only tenderly expostulate and invite? If so, her brethren will not listen. Will she not rather then entreat them to join with her in confessing the common sin and shame of the whole church, and in imploring God, the Holy Ghost, to again fill her with His presence and power, that in His light we may see light, and so come, in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God to her appointed perfection in Him.

THE THEOLOGY OF MISSIONS.—The Rev. A. J. F. Behrends, D. D., has published two able articles upon this subject in the *Independent*, in which he shows that the Westminster Confession, in teaching the salvation of "elect infants," admits the principle that one may become a subject of salvation without ever having heard or obeyed the gospel. And as modern Calvinists generally have repudiated the term "elect," as applied to infants, in the belief that all infants are saved, they thereby accept the principle that God's mercy is much wider than our human systems make room for. He argues that this concession concerning infants "amounts to a revolution in the philosophy of moral probation," and compels us to abandon the old theory upon which missions have been conducted, viz., that Christ's gospel "must be preached to the pagan millions in order to save them from eternal perdition." If God's grace can provide for all infants without their having heard the gospel, it may also provide for at least the better class of adult heathen.

For our own part, we prefer to stand by the strict gospel terms of salvation. Even Cornelius was not "saved" until after Peter had made known to him Christ. See Acts xi. 14. What is needed, in order to clear away the obscurities of this subject from the mind of the church, is the recognition of the fact that the gospel is now being preached in so-called Christian and in heathen lands, not for the conversion of all the world, but for the salvation of a chosen seed out of all nations, who are to be God's instrument of salvation, in the ages to come, to multitudes who now fail of it, and that the pledge of such extension of His grace to any who have died in their sins without the knowledge of Christ, is given in the provision He has made to raise them from the dead.